
ARBOR VITAE

THE NEWSLETTER OF TREES FOR CAPITOL HILL----SPRING 2012



Tree Planting—at Twenty Years and Counting for Trees for Capitol Hill

Margaret Missiaen, Vice-President, TFCH

Trees for Capitol Hill, Inc. celebrated its 20th year by planting trees from one end of the Hill to the other. More than two dozen volunteers helped make our November 2011 planting a success by digging holes, back filling the soil around the trees and spreading mulch. They will also water during the next two or three summers until the trees are established. At the end of the day, 17 trees were settling in along Capitol Hill streets and parks. TFCH has added well over 1,000 trees to our neighborhood tree canopy thanks to hundreds of volunteers. We now see a new generation of arborists, such as Nick and David Heim, caring for our neighborhood trees.

Our volunteers have willingly participated in the City's program to diversify the types of street trees planted in the District. For more than a century, the Trees and Landscape Division and its successor, the Urban Forest Administration (UFA), were constrained by the designated tree species plan developed during the Boss Shepard era. After Dutch elm disease gradually decimated most of the mature trees on some of our major avenues, including North Carolina, South Carolina and most importantly, East Capitol Street, arborists urged diversification of street tree species. This is a welcome change in policy as it is a sensible "pre-emptive strike" against future large-scale tree loss, should a similar scourge attack another over-concentrated species. It also permits the delight and surprise of less familiar species with their own

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River birch at North Carolina Ave & E St. SE



Forest Pansy on Independence Ave.

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unique charms.

This season's planting list reflects this appreciation of diversity of trees in public space. A river birch in the triangle park at North Carolina Ave. and E Street, SE adds to the diversity of trees in public space. Three Carolina silverbells (*Halesia Carolina*) were planted by the Turner family near one of the House office building parking lots. UFA has planted a number of redbuds where small trees are appropriate. We selected a Forest Pansy redbud for Gabe Horchler to plant in front of his home on Independence. This tree produces thousands of tiny purple flowers in early spring, followed by burgundy foliage and, as an added benefit, is a native species.

Our crew moved on to the 1700 block of Potomac Ave. where Nick Alberti had dug the hole for a memorial tree provided by the Capitol Hill Restorations Society in memory of Beth Purcell's mother. The 2.5" patriot elm was the largest tree on the truck and required all the skill of Tony Lopez of Merrifield Garden Center and his helper to set it upright in the center of the hole. This was the first of this type of disease resistant elm that we have planted. Beth had already delivered several containers of water to the site. She quickly zipped a Tregator in place and filled it with water. She will keep an eye on this tree near her home.

In the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood, Elizabeth Nelson again marshaled the community's resources to plant a wide variety of trees, Including a Chinese pistache in the park at 15th and Constitution, a horse chestnut at 14th and A Streets NE, and two purple beeches on North Carolina Ave., NE.

Our funding comes from many generous donors, including the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, the National Capital Bank and individual sponsors who contribute half the cost of a tree. Without you, we could not do our work. If you are interested in sponsoring a tree for public space (parks, public schools and tree boxes), please contact Margaret Missiaen at missiaen@verizon.net.



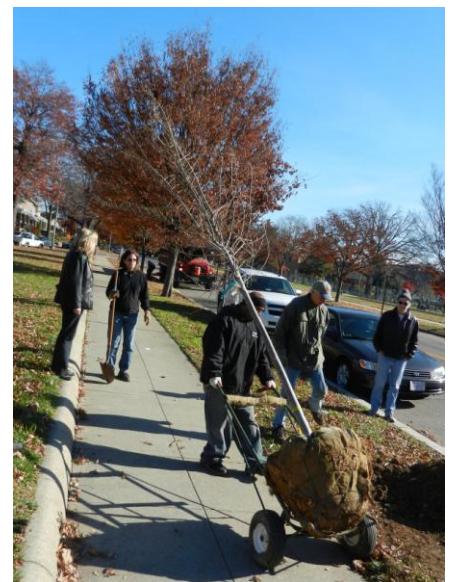
Black gum, 400 block of 6th St. NE



Silverbells on unit block of D St. SE



Buckeye at 14th & A Sts. NE



Princeton elm on Potomac Ave. SE

New Species of Street Trees Planted on the Hill

Margaret Missiaen, Vice-President, TFCH

The city's Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) has planted hundreds of new trees along Capitol Hill streets. Look for trees with wires attached to stakes. City arborists are selecting new species to use as street trees in addition to elms, lindens, maples, oaks and zelkovas that were planted in years past. Trees for Capitol Hill is helping with this diversity program by planting silver bells (*Helesia Carolina*), a standard crape myrtle, a forest pansy redbud and a horse chestnut. [See article about our fall tree planting.] A walk around the neighborhood finds tree species new to Capitol Hill as well as many rarely planted in the past, such as black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). Several planted in the 800 block of D Street, SE. [Photo 1]

I used the UFA online map to identify where some unusual trees had been planted. With dozens of location to choose from, I focused on trees planted near schools, an easy landmark for neighborhood residents. Near Payne School on 14th Street, SE, there are 3 different oak species planted on the west side of the street. A Nuttall oak is located in front of 301 14th Street with a Burr oak and a Shingle oak as you move south toward D Street, SE.

On the corner of 12th and E Streets, SE by Watkins School a newly planted Chokecherry (*Prunus maackii*) held clusters of small white flowers in early April. [Photo 2] This is the only Chokecherry I know of in the neighborhood. It has dense foliage and a conical shape that should make a good street tree. I hope City arborists will plant more of this species. There are four other new trees, 2 sweet gums, a honey locust and a linden, planted along 12th Street by the school. Most are tagged with the name of the tree.

Tenth Street, SE near Tyler School was a "sycamore street" in the 19th century plan. More recently, maples have been the tree of choice. Now several redbuds line the 700 block. Their pinkish-purple flowers are very showy in late March. Two unusual trees near Tyler are a Chinese pistache in front of 1020 G Street SE and a red buckeye at 525 10th Street SE. The buckeye will have large clusters of red flowers in late April or early May. [Photo 3]

Parents and staff a Brent School have turned the school yard into a rain garden that supports many trees. (Check the labels to identify the species.) Their efforts have included the tree lawn beside the playground in the 300 block of 3rd Street, SE. Among the new street trees are: redbud, sycamore,

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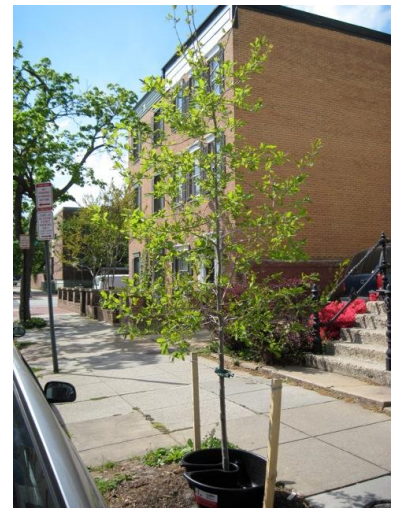


Photo 1: Black gum



Photo 2: Chokecherry

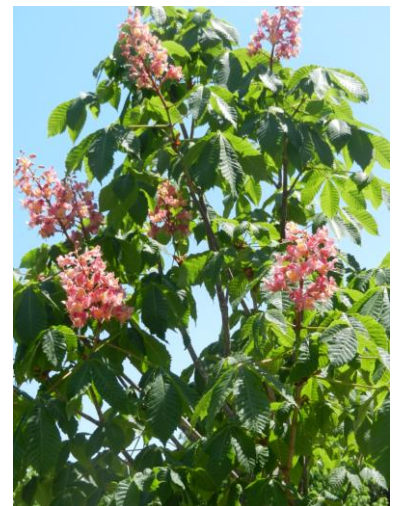


Photo 3: Red buckeye

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cherry and dawn redwood. The most unusual tree is around the corner on D Street. It is labeled *Sophora japonica*. As the leaves unfurled, they resembled those of a redbud—definitely not the compound leaf of a *Sophora*. The leaf shape and the opposite placement along the branches make me think that it is a *Katsura* tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*). [Photo 4]

Peabody School has 2 new trees in the 400 block of C Street, NE—a linden and a honey locust, but the most interesting tree is the *Rotundiloba* sweet gum in front of 214 4th Street NE. It is a close relative of gum ball producing tree (*liquidambar styraciflua*). As the name indicates, the lobes of the star-shaped leaves are rounded rather than pointed. Thus cultivar is sterile—not producing the gum ball seed pods. I also noticed several of the traditional sweet gums, including one on 7th Street NE in front of Ludlow-Taylor school. A Google search revealed that the cultivar ‘Cherokee’ was selected because it produces few seed pods. [Photo 5]

UFA has planted a few yellowwoods over the years. Each year, a few more are planted along the streets. The only one planted near a school is at Stuart-Hobson Middle School. The small specimen at the corner of 5th and E Streets, NE has lost most of its low limbs. It will need extra care this summer. My school tour ended at Maury at 13th and Constitution, NE. A male ginkgo was planted on 12th Place on the west side of the school. This is one of a few one block streets on Capitol Hill lined with ginkgos. Ginkgos are used on these narrow streets because they have an upright shape with a narrow crown. There are another two Chinese pistaches on the playground. Pistaches have a deserved reputation for being tough tree able to handle tough environments and are ideally suited to survival in the poor, contaminated soil where the asphalt has been stripped for planting.

To learn the identity of other new trees, look at the map on the UFA website. (Go to www.ddot.dc.gov. Click on Tree Planting, then Canopy Keepers: Adopt a Tree) All the street trees shown on this map (most have wooden stakes with wires) will need water this summer. You can help by joining UFA’s Canopy Keeper program and adopting a tree near your home. Trees for Capitol Hill has a few watering bags for new trees. If you would like to borrow one, contact Margaret Missiaen (Missiaen@verizon.net).

Note to Cam: I’d like to center these photos better but can’t figure out how in Word.



Photo 4: Katsura



Photo 5: Sweet gum

Check Our Website – and Volunteer!

Elizabeth Nelson

As we announced in our 2011 issue, thanks to generous funding from the National Capital Bank, and the efforts of volunteer, Mark Grace, you can follow us online at <http://treesforcapitolhill.org>. Newsletter articles, photos and other information will be posted there.

Volunteers are needed, wanted and appreciated. We are always looking for tree-huggers to assist with the fall plantings. If you know of anyone who would enjoy that activity, please lasso them! Also, our professional newsletter designer, Barbara Richey, moved to Seattle. We have temporary assistance (or you would not be receiving this publication) but we would welcome a more permanent solution. If you have publishing skills and can help with this annual effort, please let us know.

Please Water Trees

Watering Guidelines

Beth Purcell, President & Margaret Missiaen, Vice-President, TFCH

We are fortunate to have received so many new street trees this year, both through our own efforts and those of the UFA. But they have little chance of survival without our assistance; they will need supplemental water for at least their first two-three summers if they are to survive and the District government does not water street trees. It is up to the neighbors to do the watering. You can help by joining UFA's Canopy Keeper program and adopting a tree near your home. A good tip for spotting the "newbies" is to look for stakes with wires attached to them.

A quick blast from a hose encourages poor root development. It's much better to let the water trickle for 20 to 30 minutes – or better still, use a watering bag. A garden hose connected to a nearby water source makes this job easy and it provides a useful way to measure the amount of water you are delivering. The trees will need an absolute minimum of 10 gallons each week from spring bloom until winter freeze - but as much as 20-30 gallons may be needed in very hot, dry weather. Mulch is also important in keeping a tree hydrated. A 2-4 inch layer is sufficient but the mulch must be kept away from the trunk. Clean weeds and debris from the planting space. This helps in two ways. First, the tree will not have to compete with the weeds for precious water. Second, the water bags are far less likely to be punctured by mowers if there is no vegetation to mow.

The Casey Trees website (Caseytrees.org) posts moisture conditions each Monday during the growing season, eliminating the guess work in monitoring rainfall. But, even if you think that Mother Nature has been providing enough rain, it doesn't pay to be over-confident. By the time a tree looks like it needs water (is shriveled or drops leaves), it has already been damaged. Don't wait. Be pro-active!

Trees for Capitol Hill has a few bags that can be borrowed for the season. If you want one, contact Margaret Missiaen (Missiaen@verizon.net).

Watering devices are also available from DDOT if you promise to water a specific tree for the first two years after planting. Go to www.ddot.dc.gov. Click on "Tree Planting"; then click on "Canopy Keepers: Adopt a Tree." You will be asked to submit an agreement on-line or by mail to:

Urban Forestry Administration
District Department of Transportation
55 M Street, SE, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20003
202 673-6813.

Service requests can be made on dc.gov or by calling 311.



Treegators are easiest to fill by hose



Jack Montgomery and Margaret Missiaen filling Treegator with bucket



DDOT watering device (stake and wire indicate tree is recently planted)

Rich Cottrell - An Appreciation

Elizabeth Nelson

When Rich announced his retirement from Merrifield, it knocked me completely off balance. Sure, he had been talking about it for a year or two and doing his best to prepare us to continue without him. He'd been introducing us to other Merrifield staff. And his tone in imparting planting instructions (not too deep, measure the rootball, don't bring the soil level higher than it was before – the roots need to breathe!) had taken on a new urgency. But somehow I allowed myself to believe that the awful day would never come. Don't misunderstand; as a recent retiree myself, I know as well as anyone that he has a right to his rest and a change of pace. I just can't remember a time Before Rich.

I'm not much of a shopper but I looked forward, for 364 days each year, to the magical trip to Merrifield. Beth would drive and Rich would always be waiting for us. No matter the weather, it was pure pleasure finding the perfect tree for every spot on our list – and even a few impulse purchases. I called it my "Christmas shopping". Rich taught us how to look for straight trunks and strong leaders – and which growing conditions were required for each tree to thrive. He is the Obi-wan Kenobi of arborists; the Grand Master of landscape design. We all learned so much from him – or at least he did his best to teach us.

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Rich (2nd from left) with a crew in the triangle at 15th St. and Massachusetts Ave. SE in November 2007



Beth Purcell, John McLaughlin, Rich Cottrell planting at 3rd and D Sts. NE, April 1997



Rich and Nick Alberti measuring root ball on Potomac Ave., November 2009



Rich with Jennie Kopelson and Tony Lopez in November 2010

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And then, one Saturday in November, “Santa Claus” (AKA Rich) would appear in his bright red truck (no sleigh in these climes) loaded with the promise of a happy spring and verdant summers to come. He didn’t have to do it, but he always came on the truck himself. In theory, we were expected to do all the digging and schlepping but Rich and his Merrifield assistants always pitched in and did way more than we had any right to expect. Good thing, too, as there’s no way we could have wrestled those 200 lb trees off the truck without his brawn and ability to maneuver.

Will we manage without him? I suppose so. We have to. We’re not going to stop planting. But for the first time in many years I’m not already longing for that October trip to Merrifield.

Do we wish him well? My goodness, yes! If there’s a will, there’s a way and we are all determined to stay in touch with Rich. He’s been very faithful about “clipping” articles off the internet and forwarding email that he knows will be of interest and useful to us. I’ve had several of these missives already since his retirement. And we’ll find some way to lure him back on the Hill to survey his “progeny”. Next time you pause to admire our urban forest, take a moment to think of Rich and beam your thanks in his direction.

Tree of the Year Dawn Redwood

Elizabeth Nelson

Margret was so taken with the row of new Dawn Redwoods that grace the 200 block of E Street SE (the south side of Providence Park), that she chose the species, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, as the 2012 Tree of the Year. I couldn’t argue with her, I’m a fan, myself. Once thought to be extinct, it has become a popular ornamental since its rediscovery in 1944. It’s a fast grower but can be very demanding of water when newly planted. And you wouldn’t want to try it in a small space as it can reach a height of 200 feet at maturity

Native to China, it is unusual in that it is deciduous despite having needle-like leaf structures. It turns a stunning copper color before shedding its foliage in the fall. The trunk provides additional interest. As the tree matures, it develops buttresses on the lower trunk.

Two Hill specimens are pictured at right but you can also see them at the National Arboretum where there is a grove wedged between the parking areas for the dogwoods and the slow growing pines. They remind me of the trees in the Wizard of Oz who threw apples at Dorothy. The knots and bolls look so very much like faces. Spooky, in a fun way.



Mature dawn redwood at 4th and A Streets NE



Young “whippersnapper” near Providence Park

Trees For Capitol Hill, Inc.
647 South Carolina Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20003



Trees For Capitol Hill



Who we are:

Trees for Capitol, Inc., a DC nonprofit corporation founded in 1991, is dedicated to enhancing our neighborhood by planting and caring for trees in public spaces. Our funding comes from generous grants from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, the National Capital Bank and individual donors. We are a 501(c)(3) corporation.

To make a contribution, send a check made out to "Trees for Capitol Hill" to 647 South Carolina Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003

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